

Mizzou Weekly

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University research leader encourages fearlessness at roundtable



INNOVATION AND COMMERCE Rob Duncan, left, MU vice chancellor for research, and Tom Skalak, vice president for research at the University of Virginia, spoke at the Hampton Inn & Suites June 5 about the role of research universities in business creation. Rob Hill photo

BRAVE RESEARCH

More private companies seeking university innovation, speaker says

Audience members got a pep talk June 5 on how to turn university research into commercial products that bolster the mid-Missouri economy.

Rob Duncan, MU vice chancellor for research, and Tom Skalak, vice president for research at the University of Virginia, spoke at the Hampton Inn & Suites about the mindset needed to grow innovation that starts successful companies in the private sector.

“We want to translate what we do in research to improve our economic position,” Duncan told about 100 campus and local financial leaders. “Those who can rapidly and efficiently commercialize major new discoveries will win.”

Skalak said that private companies, because of their diminished research-and-development resources, are turning today to universities for innovation.

“No Fortune 500 company has such a breadth of knowledge as universities,” Skalak said. “Seventy percent of innovation is coming from public organizations.”

The event, “Building a Knowledge-Based Economy: Global Competitiveness through Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Public-Private Partnerships,” was part of the Mizzou Corporate Roundtable series. It came midway in Skalak’s two-day “Knowledge-

Based Economy Tour” that began in St. Louis and ended in Kansas City. Skalak is credited for helping bring more than \$40 million in research grants to the University of Virginia.

Skalak acknowledged MU’s success as a research institution. In fiscal 2010, for example, the university brought in \$425 million in external funding through sponsored research, contracts and diverse services. From 2007 to 2010, MU’s transfer office doubled its patent production. The MU Research Reactor Center is No. 1 in America in shipping radioisotopes for health care applications, Duncan said.

But things could be better. Skalak said it comes down to a slight attitude adjustment. In a phrase: Be fearless.

He said successful research universities are willing to push research boundaries while also being unafraid to pull the plug on hapless projects.

At times Skalak sounded like a motivation speaker. “Be a bulwark against one size fits all.” “Be unique and in tune locally.” “We’re in the inventing-the-future business. That’s what universities do.”

Skalak closed by encouraging researchers not to lose their creative spark when it comes to innovation.

“Every child is an artist,” Skalak said, quoting Picasso. “The problem is how to remain an artist when one grows up.”

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National Academies report explores role of U.S. research universities

THE FUTURE OF AMERICA

Universities need to innovate while controlling costs, report states

A report issued June 14 by the National Research Council examines the relationship between public research universities and the U.S. economy.

“Research Universities and the Future of America: Ten Breakthrough Actions Vital to Our Nation’s Prosperity and Security” was assembled by a 22-member council who, after two years of research, identified actions needed at federal and state levels and within American research universities.

Education leaders, including MU Chancellor Brady J. Deaton, have praised the report, which can be accessed online at the Association of American Universities site, [aau.edu \(http://aau.edu\)](http://aau.edu).

The report addressed three goals:

- Revitalizing partnership: Four of the 10 actions seek to strengthen relationships among research universities, federal and state governments, philanthropists and businesses.
- Strengthening institutions: Three actions address making research institutions more cost-effective.
- Building talent: Three actions address developing the sciences, engineering and other curricula that lead to research careers.

The brunt of the report explores how universities can be better positioned to take innovation to the marketplace. The report finds that colleges and universities need more federal and state money for research; need to become better collaborators with businesses on innovation projects; and need to change the public perception that they are not efficient with their finances.

The council behind the investigation was formed in 2010 by the National Academies’ National Research Council. It’s made up of higher education and business leaders, including William Green, chair and CEO of Accenture; John Hennessy, president of Stanford University; Padmasree Warrior, chief technology officer of Cisco Systems; and James Duderstadt, president emeritus of the University of Michigan.

“This is a decade-long effort,” Duderstadt said. “We’ll continue to meet as a committee and hold major regional meetings around the country. We are developing a strategy and looking at legislation.”

Most American public colleges and universities have been impacted by the loss of federal and state dollars. MU, for instance, has endured a 14 percent decline in its state funding since 2001. Meanwhile, 70 percent of research and development in America occurs at public universities, Tom Skalak, vice president for research at the University of Virginia, said this month during a talk in Columbia.

University leaders hope for a return to when the federal and state governments prioritized higher education. The Morrill Act of 1862 showed the federal government’s support by giving away, or giving the proceeds from selling, federal land to public colleges and universities. And until about a decade ago, many states were generous in their budget allocation to higher education. The committee asks state governments to “restore state appropriations for higher education, including graduate education and research, to levels that allow public research universities to operate at world-class levels.”

University research can lead to new companies, which lead to more jobs and a stronger economy. But at some point, lack of university funding and need for university research will collide, Duderstadt said. “This is a call to arms to a nation dependent on

public universities for innovation.”

The council, however, encouraged universities to be cost-effective.

“Demonstrate to the public that you can control costs,” Duderstadt said. “Maybe teach fewer courses and have fewer majors. Run [classes] full blast the whole year rather than three months of the year. You’re still paying for the air-conditioning of the building during those months.”

Deaton was impressed by the study.

“MU accepts this call to arms from some of America’s most prominent thinkers and leaders and invites support from all those who share our vision for a greater university,” he said.

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Captioning used at MU graduation ceremony for the first time

DISABILITY SERVICES

Four offices worked to make captioning possible

The first captioned graduation ceremony at MU went without a hitch. About 700 students and 125 faculty took part May 12 in the Graduate School commencement at the Hearnes Center. One of the graduates was Cami Garland, who has been deaf since birth.

Two widescreens on the left and right of the stage showed the black-lettered captions. The real-time caption process is called CART, or Communication Access Realtime Translation.

“For some who are deaf, it’s the first time they are ‘hearing’ the actual words,” said Jeanette Christian, who did the captioning remotely from her office in Topeka, Kan. “I am their ears.”

Garland, who received her graduate degree in art and archaeology, was one of five MU students who used CART in the classroom during the spring 2012 semester, said Jessi J. Keenoy, coordinator of MU’s Office of Disability Services. In recent years, about four MU students each semester have used CART.

In a classroom, CART works by having instructors fitted with a microphone connected to a deaf student’s laptop. A certified stenographer working remotely connects to the audio stream and creates the captions, which appear on the student’s computer screen.

Though Garland lip-reads, it’s not a viable option in a classroom, she said. “I lose a lot of information when I have to focus so much on processing sound and lip reading,” Garland said. “That’s why captioning helps a lot. I can spend energy focusing on the substance of what is said rather than processing what is said.”

For previous graduations, MU has accommodated the deaf by providing hand signers. But because Garland doesn’t know sign language, CART was used.

“It was one of those things necessary to make her experience of the night memorable,” said Ashley Siebenaler, senior academic adviser at the Graduate School.

Four MU offices were involved in pulling off the graduation captioning: the Graduate School, the Academic Support Center, Intercollegiate Athletics and Disability Services.

“This took a lot of coordination,” Keenoy said. “No one department can make it happen.”

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MU receives \$1.7 million grant to direct summer nuclear programs

EDUCATING NEW GENERATION

Scientists needed to replace retiring nuclear experts

Ten percent of the nation's experts in nuclear and radiochemistry are at or nearing retirement age, according to a recent report from the National Academies of Science. Meanwhile, not enough students are being trained to take their places.

Two MU scientists are doing their part this summer to get young people interested in a career in nuclear science. They are being aided by two grants worth about \$1.7 million from the U.S. Department of Energy to oversee summer school programs that encourage undergraduates to consider entering nuclear science fields.

Justin Walensky, MU assistant professor of chemistry, is leading the Nuclear Forensic Summer School at MU June 11–July 20. David Robertson, director of research at the MU Research Reactor and a professor of chemistry, is leading the Nuclear Chemistry Summer School at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, N. Y., June 20–July 22. Registration for the sessions is closed.

Robertson said the nuclear science field has led to developments in technology to diagnose heart disease and certain cancers that use a radioisotope called technetium-99m. "The nation needs more of these individuals to develop ways to make these isotopes safely and efficiently and develop new drugs for finding and treating diseases," he said.

Students at MU's nuclear summer school will receive hands-on training in topics involving nuclear forensics, including radiation detection and environmental radiochemistry — in other words, an overview of what to do after a nuclear accident.

"Our main goal in nuclear forensics is to track and contain the material," Walensky said. "Students in the summer school will be learning laboratory techniques that allow us to measure and identify radioactive material."

The summer schools are competitive. The Nuclear Forensics School accepted only 10 students from 60 applications while the Nuclear Chemistry School accepted only 24 students from more than 120 applications.

Robertson said the growth of nuclear electrical power plants in the United States requires young scientists knowledgeable in the nuclear field.

"We need to make sure we have the people in the career pipeline," Robertson said.

"These schools are one answer to that challenge."

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Professors gather for five-week seminar on novelist Jane Austen

ROMANTIC FICTION

Public is invited to several Austen events on campus

In 1994, Devoney Looser participated in a summer seminar for college and university teachers that focused on biography. The seminar was led by a professor from Auburn University and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

"It changed me as a scholar," Looser said. "It opened an entirely new world of possibilities to me."

This summer, Looser, a professor of English at Mizzou, finds herself on the other side of the table as she directs an NEH seminar titled "Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries" at MU that began this week and runs through July 20. The five-week seminar has brought 16 faculty members to Missouri from institutions around the nation to discuss the English novelist.

Looser said that, despite the massive amount of scholarship surrounding Austen, there are still aspects worthy of study.

"There hasn't been enough conversation about many of the celebrated women novelists she was surely reading who influenced her, just as she may have influenced others," said Looser, who has written two books on British women writers and performed extensive research on Austen's work.

Participants are reading and discussing four Austen novels and several novels by other British authors of her time. In addition, the seminar provides workshops on pursuing the advanced study of the authors using both emerging digital and traditional archival research techniques.

"This seminar offers faculty the opportunity to create an intellectual environment with peers and to help each other forward," Looser said. "I hope the participants will come with enthusiasm and leave intellectually invigorated."

— Josh Murray

"Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries"

Several events from the scholarly summer seminar are free and open to the public:

- Laura Mandell of Texas A&M University will speak about an online database of 18th-century scholarship 3 p.m. June 29 at 102 Tate Hall.
- Laura Mooneyham-White and Steve Ramsay, both from the University of Nebraska, will speak on Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* 3 p.m. July 13th at 102 Tate Hall.
- Austen scholars will present the results of their respective research projects at 10:30 a.m. July 18–20 in Ellis Library's Colonnade.

Visit the seminar's home page at nehseminar.missouri.edu/index.shtml (<http://nehseminar.missouri.edu/index.shtml>).

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Deteriorating mosaic to be removed

MU officials and artist Paul Jackson have reached an agreement to remove the Tiger Spot mosaic, a circular work measuring 30 feet in diameter on Lowry Mall.

Jackson, MFA '92, completed Tiger Spot in 2001, but the work has since deteriorated.

In 2007, the work was covered. Litigation arose over the mosaic's removal.

The case recently settled out of court, with MU agreeing to pay Jackson \$125,000 to relinquish his rights to Tiger Spot and allow the university to remove it.

The Art and Artifacts Committee will assess the future of the site.

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CAFNR research center offering free tours

A field day featuring agroforestry and horticulture is happening 9 a.m.–4 p.m. June 30 at MU's Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center, 10 Research Center Road in New Franklin.

The 665-acre center will offer two tours throughout the day. The first tour offers seven presentations on nut and fruit trees, small fruits, mushrooms and wine grapes. The second tour features shade tolerance trials of warm-season grasses for forages in alley cropping systems and water quality and biomass research.

Tours of one of the oldest standing brick homes in Missouri, the Hickman House built in 1819, will also be available. The home sits atop a hill at HARC.

All tours are free and open to the public. Lunch will be served 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

For more information, email Nancy Bishop at bishopn@missouri.edu or call 660-848-2268.

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